

Wanderer/Wonderer

POP-UPS BY COLETTE FU

October 14, 2016–
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Colette Fu (b. 1969) creates complex pop-up book sculptures that combine images of people, architecture, and nature. She engages passionately with myths, legends, and folklore. The drama of her subjects is matched by powerful imagery and paper engineering that take the art of pop-ups to new heights.

Haunted Philadelphia

Wanderer/Wonderer presents four works from Fu's series "Haunted Philadelphia," inspired by spooky historical sites in her hometown.

Fu's pop-ups incorporate color prints of her photography. For this series, she ventured with her camera to frightening yet intriguing "dark tourism" destinations, including Fort Mifflin and the Rodin Museum.





Fort Mifflin dates to the 1770s—it attracts visitors interested in its history as well as the ghosts said to inhabit the site. The iconography of Fu's *Fort Mifflin, Casemate 5: Circuit of Fear* (2012) refers to the prison cell for Confederate POWs, Union deserters, and other lawbreakers during the Civil War. In Fu's pop-up, an image of the hippocampus (a seahorse-shaped brain structure) illustrates how the amygdala, at the tip of the hippocampus, mediates fear.

Rodin Museum: Lovers was inspired by a sad story of Vietnam War-era lovers who secretly met at the museum's garden. They were separated by the young woman's parents, and both died tragically. Fu associated the story with the unhappy love affair of French sculptor Camille Claudel (1864–1943) and Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), her mentor and lover. Fu created pop-up versions of their sculptures in the museum's garden, which has an atmosphere of dark and theatrical foreboding.

Left: *Fort Mifflin, Casemate #5: Circuit of Fear*, from the series "Haunted Philadelphia," 2012; Artist's book with color prints, Chinese Joss paper, Philadelphia newspapers, and LED lighting, 39 x 27 ½ x 16 ¼ in. (open); Courtesy of the artist

Above: *Rodin Museum: Lovers*, from the series "Haunted Philadelphia," 2005–06; Artist's book with color prints, Chinese Joss paper, and Philadelphia newspapers, 53 x 36 x 22 in. (open); NMWA; Museum purchase with funds donated by Lynn Johnston and Julie Garcia

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We are Tiger Dragon People

Eight works are on view in *Wanderer/Wonderer* from “We are Tiger Dragon People.” This series depicts the cultures and traditions of China’s Yunnan Province, a place of stunning landscapes and great ethnic diversity.

While living and traveling in Yunnan, the ancestral home of her mother’s family, Fu reconnected with her roots and discovered her own passion for photography and storytelling.

Yi people, from whom Fu’s mother is descended, are the largest ethnic minority in Yunnan. Fu’s pop-up *Yi Costume Festival* (2008–14) illuminates a Yi legend about a young couple who escaped a jealous devil king—the girl learned to crow like a rooster to call out the sun and drive him away. Today, villagers maintain the tradition of a May costume festival, where they wear colorful cockscomb-shaped hats for luck, safety, and happiness.

Yi Costume Festival, from the series “We are Tiger Dragon People,” 2008–14; Artist’s book with color prints, yarn, and Chinese brocade fabric, 32 x 31 x 9 in. (open); Courtesy of the artist

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"A large part of the 'We are Tiger Dragon People' series was inspired by the oral tradition, tales passed on from various elders and experts. It's research I've gathered from a variety of different places and put together. It's a process that almost mirrors the way that myth and ritual percolate on the edge of the fact, blurring the line between the real and the imagined."

—Colette Fu



Fu captured the ecstatic movement of dancers in *Wa Hair Swinging Dance* (2012). Historically, Wa tribes were head hunters and warriors who believed that the spirit inhabits the skull. The hair dance, in which young women wave and swing their waist-length hair, may have had its origin in the ancient Wa practice of displaying sacrificial skulls to protect village harvests.

In *Dai Food* (2008–13) (cover), Fu features the cooking of the Dai people. She suggests the cuisine's sour, spicy, salty, and sweet flavors by densely interweaving her photographs, which emphasize varying colors, textures,



and shapes. A young Dai woman is shown with street-food specialties of the region: grilled chicken and fish, various kebabs, pig's tail, fermented eggs, beef with red pepper, snails, pork liver, spicy noodle salad, and more.

Each of Fu's pop-up books tells a story, by turns illuminating human emotions or sharing her observations of culture and expression. She is a fearless wanderer who shares her wonders and helps us understand the world around us.

Krystyna Wasserman is the curator of book arts at the National Museum of Women in the Arts.

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Left: *Wa Hair Swinging Dance*, from the series "We are Tiger Dragon People," 2012; Artist's book with color prints, 25 x 24 x 8 in. (open); Courtesy of the artist

Cover: *Dai Food*, from the series "We are Tiger Dragon People," 2008–13; Artist's book with color prints, 25 x 24 x 11 in. (open); NMWA; Museum purchase with funds provided by the Book Arts Fellows

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